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From: Enck, Judith
Sent: Thur 4/21/2016 12:45:57 PM
Subject: Fwd: News Clips (PFOA)

From: Region2 PAD News <Region2_PAD_News@epa.gov>
Date: April 21, 2016 at 8:28:10 AM EDT
To: "R2 EPA Region 2 (EPA Staff)" <R2_EPA_Region_2_EPA_Staff@epa.gov>
Subject: News Clips (PFOA)

Saint-Gobain questions Vermont's standard for PFOA

Associated Press

Wednesday, April 20th 2016

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) -- The company that owns a closed chemical plant in North Bennington has questioned Vermont's standard for the chemical PFOA.

Saint-Gobain filed a complaint in Washington Superior Court last week on the state's interim ground water standard that set a level of 20 parts per trillion. Vermont Public Radio reports Saint-Gobain also filed another appeal in Vermont's Environmental Court questioning the science behind the state's safe drinking level.

Environmental Conservation Commissioner Alyssa Schuren says the state used the most recent studies available.

Saint-Gobain is paying for drinking water sampling of private wells in the Bennington and North Bennington area to see if they're contaminated with PFOA.

Meanwhile, Gov. Peter Shumlin said Tuesday a company called APU has agreed to cover costs related to PFOA contamination at the former Warren Wire manufacturing plant in Pownal.

VNPR

Saint-Gobain Challenges State's PFOA Level In Court

By Howard Weiss-Tisman

Apr 20, 2016

The company that's been working closely with the state on the water contamination crisis in North Bennington is now questioning Vermont's low safety standard for the chemical PFOA.

Saint-Gobain filed a complaint in Washington Superior Court last week on the state's interim ground water standard that set a level of 20 parts per trillion.

And the company filed a second appeal in the Vermont Environmental Court that questions the science behind the state's safe drinking level.

Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Alyssa Schuren says the state used the most recent studies available to set its safe drinking water standard for PFOA.

"We used the same formula to set that 20 parts per trillion drinking water standard that we've set every other drinking water standard for the state of Vermont," Schuren says. "And so, we've been very consistent with our methodology, and so we'll work it through in court. It's unfortunate that they've filed a challenge, but we'll continue working in partnership with them in the other areas that we do agree."

Vermont Press Bureau reporter Neil Goswami first reported on Saint-Gobain's court challenges late Tuesday.

"It's critical for us, the North Bennington community, Vermonters and all involved to participate in the fair rulemaking process," Saint-Gobain spokeswoman Dina Silver Pokedoff wrote in an email message. "We need to understand the specific science the state has evaluated and vetted that led to setting the limit at this level."

The Environmental Protection Agency has set its health advisory level at 400 parts per trillion, and the state of New Hampshire uses a level of 100 parts per trillion.

Vermont says it set its level low to protect children, who, according to the Vermont Department of Health, consume more water as a percentage of their body weight.

"We respect Vermont's right to set its own PFOA limits in a fair manner and based on sound science, but it's important that the State adopt a standard that is reasonably appropriate, protective and realistic from a public health standpoint," Silver Pokedoff wrote.

Saint-Gobain has agreed to pay an estimated \$4 million on water tests, bottled water and carbon filters around North Bennington.

The company has not yet said if it would pay for municipal water line extensions, which could cost up to \$10 million.

"Without a doubt it would be cheaper for the company if that number was higher," says Schuren. "And if we're setting a ground water standard at 20 parts per trillion, what they're looking at in terms of remediation will be more expensive than if we set that standard higher."

Saint-Gobain used PFOA in North Bennington to produce weather resistant fabrics that

were used to cover buildings and stadiums.

Prior to the discovery of PFOA in private wells in North Bennington, Vermont did not have a safe drinking standard because the chemical had not been detected in the state.

The state set an interim standard after the chemical was detected in North Bennington.

In its complaint that was filed in Washington Superior Court on April 13, Saint-Gobain says the way the state set that standard was not in accordance with the Vermont Administrative Procedures Act.

Schuren and DEC attorney Matt Chapman are scheduled to go before the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules Thursday to seek final approval of the standard.

Just this week Saint-Gobain agreed to pay for a \$30,000 engineering study of the nearby municipal water systems.

So far 126 private wells have elevated levels of PFOA.

The state is still testing wells near the former Chemfab factory in North Bennington, which Saint-Gobain owned between 2000 and 2002.

Update 10 a.m. 4/19/16 This post has been updated to include additional information from Alyssa Schuren that clarifies the state's safe drinking water standard.

VNPR

Saint-Gobain Rep Weighs In On PFOA Contamination

By Kathleen Masterson & Mitch Wertlieb

22 hours ago

Environmental officials suspect the Chemfab plant in North Bennington has been emitting the chemical PFOA through its smokestacks for years.

Yet since the 1960s, the chemical manufacturer DuPont had information that PFOA may be linked to heightened cancer risks. It wasn't until a lawsuit in the mid-2000s that the company shared this information with the Environmental Protection Agency.

(You can read about how the EPA has very little power to regulate chemicals here.)

In 2000, the Chemfab plant was purchased by the French-based company Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics, and the company is responsible for any environmental clean-up stemming from the plant's long history.

By all accounts, Saint-Gobain has been quite responsive to the community since the

contamination was discovered. They've paid for bottled water, carbon filters and coordinated with state officials.

VPR spoke with Julia DiCorleto, General Manager of Foams & Tapes at Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics.

As DiCorleto explains, when the plant was operating it used PFOA and the synthetic fluoropolymer PTFE (the chemical in Teflon) to create water-repellant coatings.

When it came to disposing of these elements and other waste from the production process, DiCorleto says the facility followed both local and federal requirements.

On proper waste disposal

"As you know from how we have stepped up and been involved in [the current] situation, we do have a very strong commitment to the environment and health and safety. And so we do adhere strictly to all of the regulations and requirements that are local as well as national," says DiCorleto.

"In this case, there certainly is some waste that is generated but all of that was disposed of in ways that were within regulation. I don't have precise information at the moment of exactly ...where that was."

In 2001, shortly after acquiring the ChemFab plant in North Bennington, the company decided to close it and move it's operations to Merrimack, New Hampshire.

"It was really a business decision based on efficiencies of operations," she says. "At that point, there was a decision to group operations that were similar that had been spread across different plants. And instead, to really specialized plants in regards to certain operations."

On if the plant closed because of strict emissions standards

However, according to a 2001 Bennington Banner article, Stephen Hutter, the general manager of the specialty coated fabrics division at Saint-Gobain, said that the plant's ongoing challenge of keeping emissions within Vermont regulatory standards was a factor in the decision to close the plant.

Vermont required emissions abatement equipment called catalytic incinerators to clean up the emissions. New Hampshire did not require those incinerators. It's unclear if those incinerators would have captured the chemical PFOA, but they were intended to address other pollutants being emitted.

DiCorleto said she could not comment on Hutter's comments.

"There are certainly standards that, in New Hampshire, we have worked carefully with the local state officials to make sure that we can continue to operate properly in the state," explains DiCorleto. "We've worked very hard to bring our properties into alignment with standards."

On whether Saint-Gobain suspected health or environment risks

Decades before Saint-Gobain acquired the North Bennington plant in 2000, the manufacturer of PFOA, DuPont, had studies showing possible health risks associated with the chemical. In the mid-2000s this information was released to the Environmental Protection Agency and the public as part of a lawsuit.

When asked if Saint-Gobain was aware of any health and environment risks during its brief tenure operating the North Bennington plant, DiCorleto says "around the time period of 2004, 2005 and 2006 there started at that point, to be a lot of communication shared with us from our suppliers... and certainly the EPA had taken notice of the fact that PFOA was very persistent in the environment."

As part of a settlement with the EPA, DuPont and other manufacturers agreed to phase out use of PFOA by 2016.

On liability

When Saint-Gobain purchased the ChemFab plant in 2000, it did take on the liability for the plant's history, according to an email from a company representative: "when Saint-Gobain acquired Chemfab in 2000, we purchased them outright, which does include the history of operations."

Last week, Saint-Gobain filed a complaint in Washington Superior Court on the state's ground water standard that set a level of 20 parts per trillion, arguing that this standard was too stringent.

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